

A

LETTER

FROM

EARL STANHOPE,

ON THE PROPOSED

ALTERATION OF THE CORN LAWS.

LONDON:

JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.

1827.

SHACKELL AND BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S COURT.

LETTER,

&c.

DEAR SIR,

SINCE I last addressed you, a total subversion of the Corn Laws has been proposed by Ministers, and I am desirous of offering to you a few observations upon the subject. It will not have escaped your attention, that at the opening of the present Session, on the 21st of November last, the Earl of Liverpool announced his design, and that in a few days afterwards his Colleague, Mr. Huskisson, from whom the former seemed unfortunately to have borrowed some of his opinions, assured the House of Commons that the project was then completely matured; but you will recollect that it was not brought forward till the 1st of the present month. We heard it rumoured, that till a very late period before the measure was actually promulgated, Ministers were not agreed among themselves upon the subject, and, from some cause or other, it was concealed in impenetrable mystery like a secret of state, or the most important negotiation abroad, on which might depend the

decision of War or Peace. If the measure had been proposed at the time when it was said to have been prepared, an opportunity would have been afforded to Parliament and to the People of considering it in all its parts and bearings, during the recess, which lasted from the 13th of December till the 8th of February, and such an opportunity ought to have been given when the project was nothing less than an entire alteration of a system which Government had represented as permanent, and upon which it had acted for several successive years.

Had that course been adopted, which would have been fair and candid, and was required by the importance of the subject, I am persuaded that the measure would not have received the same support in the House of Commons, and that it would have been generally understood and every where reprobated throughout the Country. Even in the House of Commons it could not have advanced to its present stage if it had not received the support of many of the Opposition, who upon this, as well as upon several other occasions, have eagerly promoted those measures of the Administration which were the most pernicious. It is their conduct, and the unpopularity which justly attends it, that retains at present, and might, under ordinary

circumstances, retain for ever, some of the present Ministers in office.

The motives which have been alleged as an apology for the proposed alteration of the Corn Laws, are as strange as the measure itself, and may excite a just suspicion of their sincerity. It is said, forsooth, to be *an Improvement of the present Corn Laws, and beneficial to the Agricultural Interest!* I would ask those who thought proper to make these assertions, whether the Agricultural Interest has not very generally petitioned for a continuance of the existing system? whether it has shewn any wish to alter that system, to subvert its principle, and to substitute unrestricted Importation under fluctuating Duties for a prohibition of Importation within a certain limit? The Agricultural Interest claims the rights to which it is by law entitled, and does not apply either to Parliament or to the Board of Trade for the adoption of a new system founded on the principles of "Political Economy." Under the Corn Law of 1822, the Importation of wheat was prohibited till it had risen to the price of *eighty shillings*, and after that event had taken place, it was permitted only when the price was at or above *seventy shillings*. That law, therefore, granted a permanent protection to the amount of *seventy shillings*; and with the present Cur-

rency it was indeed highly improbable that Wheat would ever again attain the price of *eighty shillings*, or would, in consequence, be admitted into this country. In fact, no Foreign Wheat had been brought into our Markets since that Law was enacted, and the mere possibility that such might, at some period or other, be the case, is urged as a pretext for repealing a Law which had produced no inconvenience whatever; but, on the contrary, great and general advantage to the agricultural as well as to other classes.

It was also said, that the proposed measure would *prevent the fluctuation of prices* that had occurred since 1815. in consequence of the Corn Law which was enacted in that year. What! was not Mr. Peel's Bill passed since 1815, and were not the prices of Colonial Produce, and of many other articles, reduced very considerably by the operation of that Law? As well might the Corn Law of 1815 be charged with the reduction in the prices of those articles, as with the fluctuation in the prices of Corn. The one and the other originated in the same cause, in the alteration of the Currency, which was the object and operation of that Bill; and which, with unparalleled injustice, was carried into execution without any regard to the public or private obligations that then existed. You are well acquainted

with that Edict of Confiscation, for such it was in its nature, and also in its effects, till its severity was mitigated by another Law of which Government did not avow the motive. Those who are, or profess to be, ignorant upon the subject, should peruse the clear, convincing, and unanswerable Pamphlets of Mr. Western upon the question of the Currency.

Ministers, instead of giving flimsy and fallacious pretexts for the measures which they propose, ought candidly to declare the truth, and to answer this plain question, whether they do or do not intend to *lower the price of Corn?* If they do not intend it, the change cannot be represented by them as conferring even a supposed benefit on the consumer, and they will gain no popularity with those whose favour they seem disposed to court, with those who have been so ignorant or so deluded as to petition for a repeal of the Corn Laws. If they do intend it, common justice to those who would be cruelly injured by the measure, and whose property might ultimately be annihilated by its operation, ought to have induced them to grant a Parliamentary Inquiry, in order to ascertain how far any reduction of prices would be prudent or proper, or would even be practicable, without danger or detriment to all the Interests of the Country. Such

an inquiry would, in other times, have necessarily preceded the measure, and would have been considered an indispensable preliminary.

Far from proposing, Ministers have not even allowed, an inquiry on a most important point, on the *Remunerating Price*, or in other words, on the price at which Corn can be grown with a fair profit to the cultivators, and at which it ought, therefore, on an average, to be sold, but they appear to have assumed that it is 60s. The Agricultural Society of Holderness states, however, in a Petition which I presented to the House of Lords, that 64s. is the Remunerating Price in that rich and fertile district; and the same opinion is expressed in petitions from several Hundreds in Derbyshire. I know not whether those districts which by nature are so fertile, and have hitherto been so prosperous, are among those which it is intended to throw out of cultivation: an event that is anticipated with so much joy and satisfaction by the “Political Economists” of the present day. I am assured upon the authority of a most respectable person, who has had a practical experience of forty years, and who during that time, has occupied a large quantity of land, that in the district where he resides 70s. is “the very lowest price at which Foreign Wheat could be introduced without certain

“ruin to the Country;” and he observes, after stating the Remunerating Prices of other Grain, “under these prices it will be ruin to grow any of the above.” I need not trouble you with calculations respecting other Grain, as the same arguments apply to all. It is undeniably true, that as the Remunerating Price of Wheat in some fertile districts is 64s., it must be higher where the soil is of inferior quality; and it is also perfectly clear, that if Corn is sometimes sold below the Remunerating Price, it ought sometimes to be sold above that price, in order that the average may be preserved.

This proposition is, indeed, too obvious to require either proof or illustration, and yet it appears to have been entirely forgotten in framing the proposed Regulations. The Remunerating Price for Wheat, seems, in the opinion of Government, to be 60s., and if the price is now 6s. lower, or 54s., it ought of course to be allowed to rise 6s. higher, that is to 66s. As soon, however, as the price rises to that amount, Foreign Wheat may be brought into the Market on payment of a Duty of 8s., and then the price of British Wheat is immediately depressed to an extent of which those who have not considered the subject in detail would be unable to form a conception. If, when the price has reached

66s., Speculators and Jobbers should be inclined to raise the Market, which, under the system of Weekly Averages, may be an easy operation, and if, in consequence, the price should rise only 4s. more, that is to 70s., Foreign Wheat may be imported or brought out of the Warehouses under a Duty of *only one shilling*. By the Act of 1822 it would, at the price of 70s., have been subject to a Duty of *seventeen shillings* for the first three months, and of *twelve shillings* afterwards. I would therefore ask you, whether it is not the grossest delusion which was ever attempted to be practised upon any rational beings, when it is represented that the operation of the proposed regulations would be “to keep wheat as nearly as possible at the price of 60s.?” I do not believe that many Farmers have been misled upon this question, but if any partial or transient approbation of the proposed alteration has any where been expressed, I am convinced that it arose in a great measure from that delusion, and from the consequent expectation that Wheat, which for some time past has been below 60s., would speedily rise again to that price.

It is very important for the Occupiers of Land to consider what would be the necessary effect of the proposed Regulations, after one of

those unfavourable harvests which must occasionally occur. They would find that instead of their selling a short crop at a higher price, as is natural and reasonable, under those circumstances, they might, and probably would, be obliged to sell it even at a lower price than they would expect and receive for a very abundant crop. I will suppose, although I do not admit it to be the case, that the Remunerating Price for Wheat is 60s., as is assumed by the proposed Regulations, that the price might, after a plentiful Harvest, fall to 50s., and that it might, after a deficient Harvest, rise to 70s. At the price of 50s. no Importation would take place, but whenever the price rises to 70s., those Regulations are so skilfully contrived for the ruin of the Agricultural Interest that the Ports and Warehouses are opened for Foreign Wheat at a Duty of *one shilling per Quarter*; and in that event it might, I think, be sold in our Markets for 30s. per Quarter, or *even at a still lower price.*

This will appear evident when you examine the prices on the Continent, which, according to the returns of the British Consuls, and on an average of the year 1825, were in the under mentioned Ports of the North of Europe, as follows :

		<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1 Copenhagen	<i>per quarter</i>	15	2
2 Memel	<i>do.</i>	16	5½
3 Hamburg	<i>do.</i>	18	0
4 Königsberg	<i>do.</i>	18	10¼
5 Emden	<i>do.</i>	19	3
6 Liban	<i>do.</i>	20	0
7 Rotterdam	<i>do.</i>	20	5¼
8 Dantzig	<i>do.</i>	20	6
<hr/>			
Being an average of the above		18	7

It is stated in the Petition to which I have before referred, of the Holderness Agricultural Society, “ That it is a fact well known “ in the Port of Hull, that before the late “ Orders in Council for admitting the sale of “ Foreign Wheat, good Wheat then in Bond, “ was on sale, as an article of merchandize, in “ that Port, at the price of 24s. per Quarter.”

The prices on the Continent would, it is said, rise considerably if Foreign Corn could at all times be brought into our Markets, and I am ready to admit, that some advance would at first take place ; but I see no reason whatever to expect that the prices would be permanently raised. Even Mr. Jacob’s Report furnished sufficient proofs, that in those parts of the Continent which he visited, the cultivation could be *very much extended and improved* ; and that in this, as in many other cases, the *supply would equal if not exceed the*

demand. This has already been shewn with respect to the production of Wool upon the Continent, in consequence of the increased demand in this Country. You know that Mr. Jacob's Report contains no information whatever with respect to the produce, or to the prices of some Countries where Corn is grown in great abundance; and you know also that it is utterly impossible to foresee how much Corn might be imported into this Country, or at how low a rate it might be sold. It is obvious, that it would be the interest of those who had large Stores of Corn to sell it even at some loss, as it is a perishable article, rather than allow it to be consumed by vermin, or destroyed by natural decay.

It may also be said, that those who bring Foreign Corn into our Markets, will indeed sell it at a lower price than our own, so as to obtain the preference; but not at such a price as would very much depress its value, as they would otherwise lose a portion of their profits. Their permanent interest is, undoubtedly, to depress as much as possible the Markets, to ruin the Farmers, to throw the Land out of Cultivation, and thus to obtain the monopoly for themselves, when it would be in their power to demand their own prices, and to compel us to submit to their own terms. In this Country, it has been ob-

served, that a Monopoly is often the object of a Competition, and that two rival establishments will bid against each other, in order that one of them may become bankrupt, and that the other may engross the whole Trade to itself. If we were to become dependent upon Foreign Countries for a supply of Corn, and such, I am convinced, would be the inevitable result of the proposed Regulations, the prices of Corn, far from being permanently lowered in this Country, would *ultimately become much higher* than they are at present, but they would be paid for *foreign importations*, and not for our own produce. The principle of the present Corn Law is not merely protection to Agriculture, but also National Independence and Safety; and it was truly stated in a Report of a Committee of the House of Commons, that "*an habitual and extensive dependence on Foreign Supply,*" is "*neither salutary nor safe.*" I might refer upon this point to the opinions which were formerly expressed by Mr. Huskisson, in a letter to one of his Constituents, and which were avowed also by some of his Colleagues; but, as we well know, and as recent experience has proved, consistency is little prized or practised by some Members of the present Administration.

The injustice and injury which would be inflicted by the proposed Regulations, are very

much increased, and become intolerable through the Bonding System by which Foreign Corn may remain in the Warehouses for an indefinite period, without the payment of any Duty, till the Corn is removed from them. That system tends obviously to discourage the purchases of British Corn, gives great opportunities for frauds, and the utmost possible inducement to speculation. By means of that system, the Corn Market may become even more than the Stock Exchange, a theatre for gambling speculations and rash adventures, by which some may gain and others may lose, but by which great fluctuations must take place, and the interests of the Country must suffer and may be sacrificed.

Under such circumstances what security can be possessed by the Occupiers of the Soil? What confidence can they entertain? What calculations can they form with respect to their present engagements, or to any others which they may contract? They might enjoy protection if Taxes had been imposed upon Foreign Corn, according to the prices at which the several kinds of it could be imported, and if, in consequence, Foreign Corn had been excluded from our Markets as effectually as is now the case. The prices as well as the expences of freight vary, however, in different Ports, and under different

circumstances, and it would be impracticable for human skill and ingenuity to fix the proper amount of such Taxes. It was reserved for the wild innovators of the present age, for the “Political Economists” who are allowed to make rash and dangerous experiments with the Currency, with the Trade and Navigation, and with the Agriculture of the Country, to contrive a plan by which a Tax should be imposed upon Foreign Corn not according to its own prices, but according to the prices of this Country, and by which our supply should be entirely regulated by those over whom we can have no controul, and the subsistence of all the Agricultural Classes should be placed entirely at their mercy. Such is the influence which some persons have been permitted to usurp in this Country, that they can accomplish in a very short time, and by very simple means, through an Act of Parliament, that *general ruin* which during many years was the object of the zealous, unremitting but unavailing exertions of Buonaparte, of his genius and of his power; and that they might ultimately produce a *Revolution*, which all the Radicals and Reformers of the Country would, without their assistance, be unable to effect.

Under the present system the Farmers might have felt confidence, and might have enjoyed Protection to the amount of *seventy*

shillings per Quarter on Wheat, if our Ministers had not altered the Currency, and had suffered the Corn Laws to have their due operation; if they had not frequently infringed them by allowing Canada Wheat, and afterwards Bonded Wheat, to be brought into our Markets; and if they had not, without any plausible pretext for such a measure, obtained the discretionary power of permitting the importation of half a million of Quarters of Foreign Wheat, when the price in our Markets was very considerably below a Remunerating Price.

A very intelligent Farmer said to me lately, “Happen what will, whether the new Corn Regulations do or do not pass into a Law, I will never again take a Farm in this Country, for Government does not keep its faith with Farmers, and it is quite impossible for them to feel any confidence.” In fact, when we recollect the declaration of the Earl of Liverpool in 1815, that the Corn Bill proposed in that year was a *permanent system*, and was to be regarded as a *final settlement of the question*, what can we think, what must we say of his conduct and of that of his colleagues in violating the principle of that Law upon several occasions, and in now proposing its entire subversion? Can we forget what is reported to have been once said in the House of Commons, by a Member whose opinions have great weight

in that assembly, “*the landed interest must be reduced, and I will sound the tocsin of alarm if any thing is done to protect it.*”

The imperfection which exists in the Corn Law of 1822, is no more to be urged as a reason for its repeal, than the imperfection which may be found in any human institution could be considered as an apology, not for its amendment, but for its annihilation. That Corn Law was represented, in poetical language, as exposing this Country to the danger “either of a Drought or of a Deluge,” in the Supply of Corn. It is undoubtedly true that, under the new system, no “Drought” of Foreign Corn can possibly be expected, and no deficiency might occur, except of our own produce; but if alarm was felt for a “Deluge,” under a duty of *seventeen shillings*, and afterwards of *twelve shillings* on Importation, when the price of Wheat became *seventy shillings*, is that alarm to be removed—is the danger of that “Deluge” to be prevented by lowering the Duty to *one shilling*? Whatever the imperfection of the last Corn Law may be, which, however, has been found only in theory, and not in practice, the Owners and Occupiers of Land have not, in any District, solicited its repeal; but, on the contrary, Petitions have been sent from all quarters to both Houses of Parliament, to pray that

“ no alteration may be made.” Although one Minister had the boldness to assert, that he believed the proposed Regulations were very generally approved, I am convinced that the very reverse will be proved to be the case ; and that in all parts of the Country the loudest complaints will be heard, the strongest remonstrances will be urged against a system which involves nothing less than universal ruin.

When every attempt is made to delude and to inflame the public mind, upon a subject of vital importance to all classes of the community ; when those, whose object is mischief, employ falsehood and misrepresentation as the means of producing it, the Owners and Occupiers of Land are bound, by public as well as private duties, to use every exertion in endeavouring to dispel the delusion, and to preserve themselves from distress, and their property from destruction. Zeal, Energy, and Union, would render them invincible ; but, in this great crisis of their fate, some of the Country Gentlemen, some of the “ Unpaid Magistracy,” who have been so unjustly eulogized, have exhibited an apathy and torpor which was most disgraceful to them and most detrimental to the Country. The petty concerns of their respective neighbourhoods, the pursuit and preservation of their Game, and

the punishment of Poachers, seemed to have engrossed the minds of some of those persons, and to have excluded the consideration of what was due to themselves, to their Tenants and Labourers, and to the general interests of the State. Let us still hope that they will at length be roused from their slumbers before it is too late, before the thundering voice of an indignant and injured People would announce to them that the storm is breaking upon their heads.

Let them not console themselves with the expectation, that when the destructive consequences of the new measure have been fully exhibited by experience, as they have been already in theory, the evils which had been produced by it would be remedied by its repeal. When the capital of their Tenants becomes exhausted, when some of their Tenants are reduced to pauperism, and others have removed to Foreign Countries, is it supposed that it would be easy, or even possible, to provide new Occupiers of sufficient skill and capital? or, indeed, that many persons would be willing to till the Land when its Cultivation had brought ruin on those who had been engaged in it? This would be utterly impossible on the large Farms, which were so much in fashion, but to which, I am averse, upon principle, as well as in my own practice. It was very justly observed by Lord

Redesdale, that “ some of the Farmers would “ go, nay, that some had already gone, to “ France, as that Country had adopted the “ English Corn Laws.” Such is the distress which has already been produced in this country by mischievous experiments, and amongst others by the alteration of the Navigation Laws, that invaluable Bulwark of our national safety and of our naval defence, that an eminent Ship Owner assured me lately, that unless the present system were speedily to be amended, he would leave this Country, and settle in a Sea-port of Germany, for the purpose of carrying on his business with advantage.

It is indeed interesting, as well as instructive, to make a short comparison between the relative situations of this Country, and of that Empire which is pre-eminently distinguished by its mild and paternal Government, and by the happiness and welfare of its Subjects, I mean the Empire of Austria. In Great Britain, the gross amount of Taxation, including Poor’s Rates, and other Parish and County Rates, would average *five pounds* per head on the whole Population ; but in Austria the average appears to be only *seven shillings and sixpence* per head. The Wages of Labour in Austria bear exactly the same proportion as exist in this Island to the price of Wheat at

sixty shillings per Quarter ; but in Austria only *eighteen* days' labour will suffice to pay the average amount of Taxation, for which *sixty* days labour are requisite with us ; and there it may be paid by *half a Quarter* of Wheat, while *one Quarter and two-thirds* are necessary here for the same purpose. This comparison leads to two inferences, the truth of which cannot be denied, or even disputed, that with such an immense difference in the amount of Taxation, it would be utterly impossible for our Corn to enter into competition with theirs, and that it is not the price of Wheat, which is not cheaper there than it is here with reference to the Wages of Labour, but the weight of Taxes which in this Country is a just subject of complaint.

Much has indeed been said about the high price of Corn in this Country, and it has even been termed a “Famine Price.” The real and true definition of a “Famine Price” is, I think, the price at which the ordinary Wages of a labourer do not enable him to purchase a sufficient quantity of Bread. Such a calamitous state of things, which no man who has a heart within his bosom could witness without the deepest sorrow, and without the utmost sympathy for the sufferers, may occur either from a great advance in the price of Bread, or from a great fall in the Wages of

Labour, and a general want of Employment. In whatever mode the disproportion is created, the effect will be the same. The distress which now afflicts some of the Manufacturing Districts, did not exist in the year 1825, during which the price of Wheat was, on an average, about *twelve shillings per Quarter higher than it is at present.* That distress may become general throughout the country, when Land is thrown out of Cultivation, and the Labourers are thrown out of Employment, and driven to subsist on a scanty pittance which they would receive, as Paupers, from the Parish.

It is the less requisite for me to trouble you with any observations upon the advantages which some persons suppose that an alteration of the Corn Laws would produce in relieving the Manufacturers and in extending Trade; because neither of those topics appear to have been even noticed by Ministers in proposing and in defending their new measures. So much clamour has, however, been raised upon both these points, and so much ignorance and delusion exist respecting them, that you will excuse me for making a few remarks. I need not repeat that the distress of the manufacturers has arisen solely from the Want of Employment, and that it would of course be still more severely felt when the Home Market,

which consumes *four-fifths* of their Goods, had been ruined by the impoverishment of the Landed Interest. Even if the demand for Labour and the Wages of Labour were, under such circumstances, to continue the same, which is utterly impossible, and could be credited only by those who are bereft of common sense, you will perceive, by a very simple calculation, that a reduction in the price of Wheat, which would be quite ruinous to the Occupier of Land, would bring no relief to the Artizan. Take for example the East Riding of the County of York, which, as the Holderness Agricultural Society states, is “*a District as productive of Corn, and as cheap in price, as any in the kingdom,*” and in which the Remunerating Price for Wheat is sixty-four shillings. It is also stated by that Society that *two-thirds of that price* “*are unavoidably expended in the Wages and ordinary maintenance of Servants and Labourers, and other expenses of raising Corn from the Ground and sending it to Market, and the various other Imposts to which Cultivators are liable.*” There remains, therefore, *one-third of that price*, or twenty-one shillings and four-pence, to divide between the Landlord and Tenant for Rent to the former and for Profit to the latter, and Interest upon the Capital which he had invested. If, therefore, the price of

Wheat is on average reduced eleven shillings per Quarter, *the Rent of the Landlord or the Profit of the Tenant must be annihilated*; but as a Quarter of Wheat is considered to be the average consumption of each person annually, the gain at the end of the year to the Artizan would be eleven shillings, or about *two pence halfpenny per week*. Supposing the average wages of a manufacturer to be fifteen shillings per week, he would thus be enabled to save about *one penny out of every six shillings*, or one *seventy-second part* of his earnings, while *the Landlord or the Tenant would lose the whole of his Income*.

As to the expectation which has deceived, and will disappoint so many persons, that the Foreign Trade of this Country would be promoted by reducing the price of Corn at home, and by importing it from abroad, it is fancied that the Wages of Labour would be lowered, and that Foreigners would purchase a greater quantity of English Manufactures. Through the very extended use of Machinery the prices of the Goods are much less influenced than may be imagined by the Wages of Labour, which are now in some of the Manufacturing Districts much lower than ought to be the case. The Master Manufacturers have therefore at present the advantage about which they appear so anxious, of giving very low

Wages of Labour ; and yet they are, as is well known, in the utmost embarrassment and distress. They would not be enabled by a reduction in the price of Wheat to sell their Goods at a lower price, nor even to sell them in a greater quantity than at present. Is it then supposed that Foreigners would have the complaisance or the compassion to empty the English Warehouses, instead of demanding Specie in payment of their Corn, which they would send in the greatest abundance to this Country ? Is it supposed that the Landed Proprietors of the Continent would prefer Manufactures to Money, which to some of them would be of essential service for the discharge of incumbrances, and which to others of them would furnish the means of extending and improving the cultivation of their Estates ? Such suppositions are most unreasonable in themselves, and are disproved by present as well as by past experience. They are disproved by the *vast Importations of Wool* which have taken place without any corresponding increase ; nay, as we have been informed, with an *actual decrease in the Export of Manufactured Woollens*, by the immense quantity of Foreign Corn which was brought into this Country in the years 1817 and 1818, during which the average amount of Exports was *less by nearly two millions* than the average

of the two preceding years; and by facts which are of public notoriety, that in several large purchases which were lately made upon the Continent, it was demanded, as an indispensable condition, that the *Payments should be made in Gold*. If a free Importation of Foreign Corn were allowed, it must be expected that all the Gold which is now in this Country would be sent from it; and if under such circumstances an attempt should be made to continue the execution of Mr. Peel's Bill, the consequences would be general Beggary and National Bankruptcy.

A reduction of the National Debt and of Taxes in general was solicited in some of the Petitions which have been presented to Parliament for a Repeal of the Corn Laws; and it is no doubt natural and reasonable, as well as just and proper, that those who ask for the latter should ask also for the former. It is, however, superfluous for them to require the reduction of the National Debt, since it would follow of itself, and as a matter of course, from the repeal of the Corn Laws, and would be a necessary and unavoidable consequence of that measure. When general distress and pauperism rendered impossible the collection of the Revenue, and therefore the payment of the Dividends, the result would be not only a reduction, but at last an absolute annihilation

of the National Debt, of which not a vestige would remain. It is true that one Tax would continue to be levied, that which, under the name of an Importation Duty, the Government would impose upon the food of the People; and it is also true that the Corporation of London which petitioned against the present Corn Laws, would receive a Revenue by the "Metage" of Foreign Corn.

Consider the calamities which would be produced in Ireland by large importations of Foreign Corn with which theirs could not possibly compete. You are well acquainted with the opinions which I entertain with respect to that Country, and which I shall at all times be willing to avow and able to defend, and you are also aware that no person can wish more ardently or anxiously than myself that its grievances may be redressed, and its peace and prosperity promoted. The measures which I would recommend for that purpose, the necessity of which becomes every day more and more urgent, are quite different from that project which has been so frequently discussed, and about which so much agitation has been excited. I will not, however, on this occasion make a digression, which might become a long dissertation, upon this subject; but I will merely observe, that the sale of Foreign Corn in large quantities, and at low prices,

in this Country, would *exclude Irish Corn from our Markets*, and that the benefit which Ireland derived from sending to them *two millions of Quarters in a year*, would entirely cease. Could any measure be devised so well calculated to injure and to exasperate the inhabitants of that Country, to destroy all their hopes of future improvement, and to drive them not only to acts of violence and outrage, but even to open Insurrection? Is it possible that a measure which they must view with detestation and dismay, could receive the support of any of those who are connected with that Country by birth or property, by public or private ties, who are interested in its welfare, or who are alarmed for its tranquillity?

Whether the tranquillity of this Country will, or even can be preserved, under such circumstances, is a question which deserves the most serious consideration of Parliament. As it is impossible to import a large quantity of Corn from abroad, and to grow the same quantity at home, or under any circumstances to grow Corn at an actual loss, the necessary consequence must be that much, if not all of the Land, would be thrown out of tillage, and that many Labourers would be thrown out of employment. This is avowed by the "Political Economists," who indeed exult in the prospect that the cultivation of

all Lands of inferior quality would entirely be abandoned, and who have often asserted that the Agricultural Labourers who would thus be deprived of their means of subsistence, and be reduced to pauperism, "might seek for "employment in Manufactures." They know that it is physically impossible for those who have passed their lives in the occupations of Husbandry to become Manufacturers ; and that there is no sort of Trade or Manufacture in which additional employment could be found. Their assertion adds insult to the injuries which their measures have inflicted upon this ill-fated and ill-governed country. Already in many Districts there is, *in consequence of the low price of Corn*, a lamentable want of employment for the Poor, and an alarming increase of the *Poor's Rates*, which may, ere long, consume the *whole of the Incomes* on which they are charged. The Holderness Agricultural Society states, that "three labourers only are employed where there is work for four," so that *one fourth of the Labourers are already thrown out of employment*, and it adds "that those who are employed are receiving Wages amounting to a bare subsistence for the ablest men in the prime of life, without the possibility of laying by any thing for sickness or accident." I would ask, whether Parliament has, or can have any right by

legislative measures to plunder the Inhabitants of this Country for the profit of Foreign Nations, or to deprive the Labouring Poor of their employment and means of subsistence, and whether it is expected that such injuries will be patiently suffered ?

I am, as you well know, one of those old-fashioned Tories, who wish that *all Rights may be respected, all Property may be secured, and that ancient Institutions may be preserved.* Can we, however, hope that any Property will be safe, or that any Institutions will be permanent, if all the Interests of this Country are to be sacrificed by continuing a course of experiments in “Political Economy?” If by rash and dangerous innovations no Rights are sacred, and no Property is secure; if the Monied Interest, the Manufacturing Interest, the Mercantile Interest, the Shipping Interest, and also the Landed Interest, are to be involved in destruction; if distress is every where severely felt, and discontent should at last become disaffection; I know not what chance would then exist of maintaining the Constitution and Government under which we live. The respect and estimation in which that Constitution will be held by the People of this Country, must depend upon the happiness or misery, upon the practical benefits or practical evils which are derived from it,

and not upon any advantages that it is supposed to possess in theory. Complaints have been made by those who call themselves Whigs, about the oppressions of arbitrary Governments, but they will not find in the Histories of those Monarchies that any Edict of Confiscation was issued against any class of their Subjects. The Parliament of this Country has now the choice before it of Peace and Prosperity on the one hand, or Ruin and perhaps Revolution, on the other; and whatever course it may adopt, whatever calamities may be suffered, and whatever convulsions may ensue, I shall at least enjoy the consolation of having endeavoured to discharge my duty.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Very faithfully Yours,

STANHOPE.

Chevening, March 24th, 1827.

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